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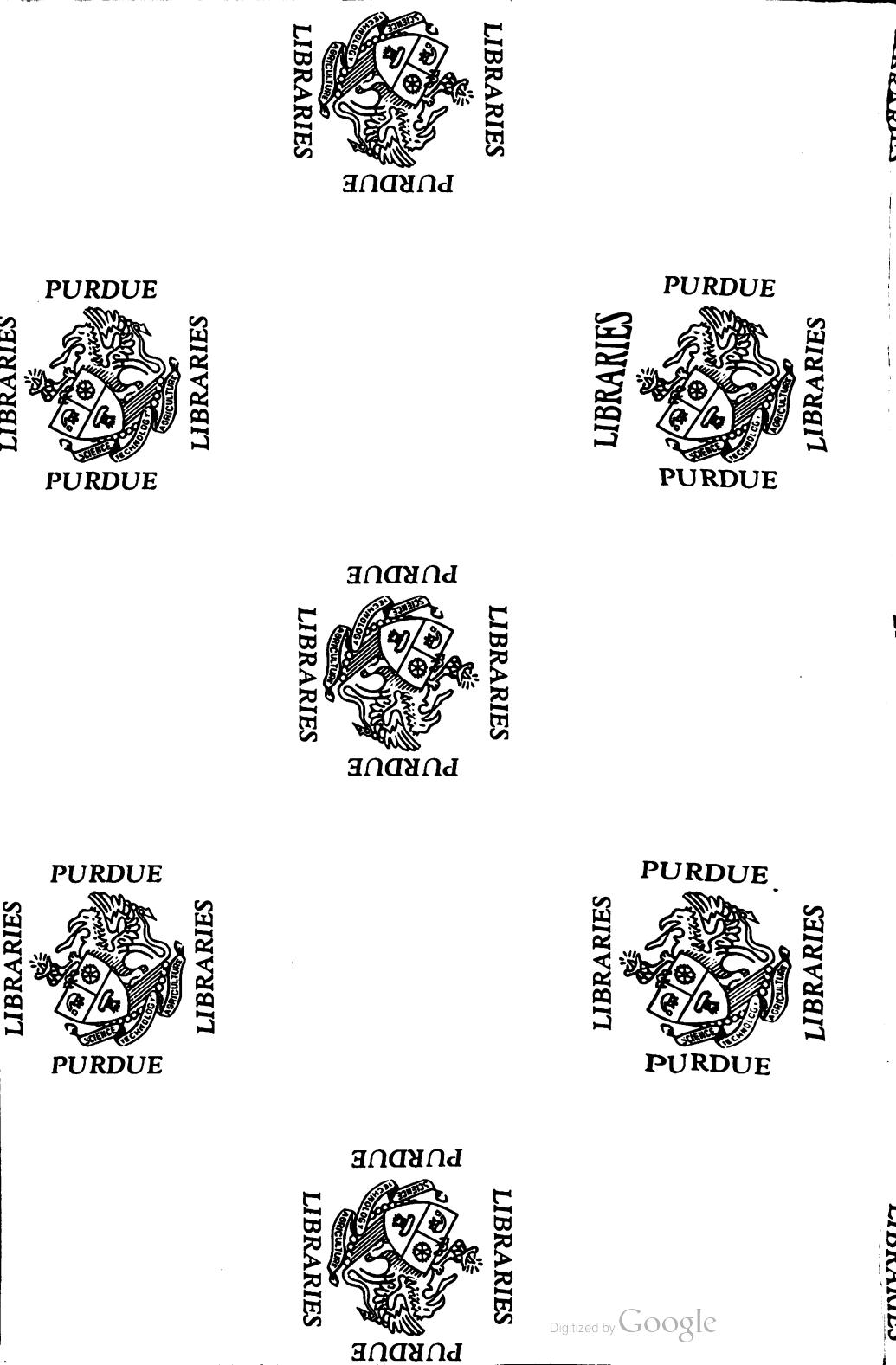
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No. 4

# M.H.R.A.

BULLETIN OF THE MODERN  
HUMANITIES RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

*Edited by*

H. J. CHAYTOR

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## MOLIÈRE AS A REFORMER

### IV

*(Continued from p. 61.)*

No man can escape his own shadow, and certainly Molière could not fail to show in his works the imprint of his convictions. Nor could his plays escape the point of view that his peculiar temperament, coupled with his particular experiences, was bound to establish. The plays alone, without reference to external evidence, ought to reveal the characteristic spirit by which he was consistently animated, and so they do. Everywhere the comic and farcical spirit prevails, and every intention of reform or morality, where its existence might be conceded, ranges itself as subordinate and incidental to the main business of tickling the risibilities of the audience.

In *Les Précieuses Ridicules* occurs for the first time in his works a recognizable question of reform. Two young and extremely foolish country girls arrive in Paris, where they wish to imitate what they fondly believe to be the elegant life and grand manners of the capital. Being under the influence of the absurd novels of Mlle. de Scudéry, they naturally translate their desire for cultivation and elegance into the terms of preciosity. Their behaviour becomes a matter of laughable delicacy and exquisite decorum. Their speech becomes a monstrous affectation, and their notion of love a transcendentalized and etherealized travesty astonishing to behold. It is easy to declare that here Molière saw an absurdity, and naturally wished to reform it.

But what he did here was to make articulate and to intellectualize the aversion of the common man for extravagance in expression

and absurdity in behaviour. In vol. viii., p. 204, of the *Molièriste*, a writer justly says : "Les Précieuses ne sont pas un caractère—une petite manie à la mode. La passion, les sentiments sérieux, les principes essentiels de la conduite ne sont nullement engagés dans la préciosité. C'est une fantaisie, un caprice né de lectures extravagantes. . . . Le sujet est restreint à un détail passager des mœurs de ce temps-là, . . . mais la pièce touche déjà à la grande comédie. Ce n'est plus le simple accident de l'intrigue, comme dans L'Étourdi, c'est un trait de sottise dont les nuances remplacent l'intrigue . . . (mais) nous n'apercevons plus qu'une bizarrerie d'occasion."

Precisely because it was "une fantaisie," "un détail passager des mœurs de ce temps-là," "une bizarrerie d'occasion," it held all the comic effects that Molière strove for. This fact is again soundly expressed in the *Molièriste*, vol. ix., p. 327 : "Certainement *Les Précieuses* sont (sic) un chef d'œuvre, et dans un genre dont la comédie en France n'avait jamais eu de modèle. Certainement c'était de piquant et d'imprudent *bardinage* que de parodier précieux et précieuses, tout le *Dictionnaire de Saumaise* en pleine crédit, de chatouiller avec la barbe, ou plutôt avec le bec aigu de la plume, les grande comédiens de l'Hôtel par excellence, et ces messieurs de *Recueil des Pièces Choisies*; le parnasse galant dont la galerie Choiseul et Sercy le Lemerre était le centre." The term "badinage" is here significant in connection with Molière's human personal malice and professional jealousy of the favoured "comédiens de l'Hôtel." Far from lowering our estimate of the dramatist, it increases our admiration for him as a whole-hearted and quite natural man who had the genius to endow the objects of his aversion and jealousy with amusement for the public.

The *Cocu Imaginaire* rests upon the old pattern of the buffoonish husband, rightly or wrongly suspicious of his wife, and the unfaithful, or potentially unfaithful, wife. Here there is, of course, no room for a serious question of reform or of morals, laugh production being obviously paramount.

At first glance *Don Garcie de Navarre* seems to present a thesis which could be regarded as a genuine reformer's blow at the human frailty : a character makes himself, as well as those who esteem him, wretched by his unwarranted jealousy and suspicion. What conclusion does it seem that the spectator should draw? That, as he treasures happiness, he should never fall a prey to easy suspicion. But the matter involved more than that; for, as Molière was here making a determined effort to retain connection with the serious, if not precisely tragic, drama, he

was obliged to employ the conventional material of serious drama. Just as he had to obey the Aristotelian dictum with regard to a worthy noble hero, so he had to have an acceptable moral issue, and a single mortal weakness in an otherwise perfect hero.

And a moral issue he therefore had. But one cannot help feeling that the essentially comic stage business by which Don Garcie deluded himself into successive states of groundless jealousy, as in the case of Done Ignès's disguise as a man, was more diverting to Molière and to his audience than the scowls and bilious postures of the hero. Never for a moment do sympathy and respect for the Spaniard dim our enjoyment of the comical elements of the play.

Although *L'École des Maris* seems to be one of the hardest of his plays to reconcile with the purpose of reform and the service of morality, it belongs to that class to which has been attributed the greatest amount of ethical intention. To some it is an argument against the marriage of age with youth; to others, against unremitting severity in the treatment of women. The first argument is altogether inadmissible; and the second, if it is to be supported at all, is based upon internal evidence which is so unconvincing that it is inconceivable that a man of Molière's commonsense ever expected, or intended, to convince anyone with it. To support it, one must assume that Molière planned to show that a woman necessarily loves the man who treats her indulgently, even if he is old. This, experience clearly shows, is nonsense. For this purpose we are expected to suppose he created that absurd little prig Léonor, who is at the last extremity from verisimilitude. But she was created for no such serious purpose, for she seems to be conceived in a vein of pure farce. It is only necessary to listen to her to realize how lightly Molière regarded her and the kind of virtue for which she stood:

Que tous ces jeunes fous me paraissent fâcheux! Je me suis dérobée au bal pour l'amour d'eux. (It is not unreasonable to ask what she went for altogether.)

LISETTE. Chacun d'eux près de vous veut se rendre agréable.

LÉONOR. Et moi, je n'ai rien vu de plus insupportable :

Et je préférerais le plus simple entretien

À tous les contes bleus de ces diseurs de rien.

Ils croient que tout cède à leur perruque blonde,

Et pensent avoir dit le meilleur mot du monde,

Lorsqu'ils viennent, d'un ton de mauvais goguenard,

Vous railler sottement sur l'amour d'un Vieillard;

Et moi, d'un tel Vieillard je prise plus le zèle

Que tous les beaux transports d'une jeune cervelle.

In addition to the rich humorous qualities of this character, there is the comedy of caricature in an obsessed fool like Sganarelle. Many men have considered, even been preoccupied with, the problem of virtue in a loose age. Yet they have not become unbalanced fools like Sganarelle, who thus stands not as a characterization but as a farcical caricature. Thus it is that these amusing antics, particularly of Sganarelle, are intended to interest the audience, and not to raise the question of winning feminine love and preserving feminine virtue.

*L'École des Femmes*, holding for some the thesis of the irresistibility of young love, is sufficiently like *L'École des Maris* to require no special treatment. The *Critique de l'École des Femmes*, being merely an agreeable ramification of the other two, falls in the same category.

While in the majority of Molière's plays the element of comic diversion is admittedly of the first importance, *Tartuffe* seems to be different. It, perhaps more than any other, has been regarded as the vehicle of a very definite moral purpose. The principal character from whom the play takes its name is a designing and malicious hypocrite, exploiting the credulity and piety of his benefactor. Obviously such a situation would seem to be an opportunity for a sermon against hypocrisy, and that this is so we have Molière's own testimony. But despite this evidence the proof for such a view is not conclusive. Even if Molière defends it as such, it is not a sermon.

The consecutive steps by which this play assumed an emphatic moral significance will shed light upon the manner in which the ethical content in Molière's plays in general has come to be stressed. First of all, the hypocrite, *Tartuffe*, has by one means or another, whether Molière originally so intended or not, assumed clerical characteristics, been made to resemble the "directeur de conscience," generally, though not always, a full-fledged priest. This sort of guide, found in every wealthy and noble household as well as in many ordinary ones, was peculiar and common to the age. Even the eminent Bossuet, far removed as he was from the mercenary pink-tea abbé, did not disdain to exercise the functions of such a director, at least by correspondence. Weiss notes the following : "Mais il (le directeur de conscience) était très répandu, très florissant en 1660, au moment où Molière écrivait. . . . L'homme le plus éminent de l'Église du xvii<sup>e</sup> siècle, Bossuet, n'a pas dédaigne d'exercer ces fonctions de directeur, au moins au correspondence . . . la conception de cette puissance absolue qu'il exerce doit nous donner la mesure des

ravages que devait faire un directeur de conscience moins désintéressé ou moins sage."

Under these conditions, where it was so easy and natural to identify the hypocritical Tartuffe with officers of the Church, it is not surprising that a storm of protest should have been raised by the "directeurs" and their friends, as well as by those who saw in the play a blow at the Church itself. The consequence was, of course, immediate judicial prohibition of the play.

When all this had occurred, and Molière saw that the attack was based upon moral considerations, he realized that there was nothing to do but to meet his enemies on the grounds they had selected—namely, moral grounds. This was both good logic and good defensive tactics. He therefore proceeded to address his *Placets*, petitions to the King, putting up a defence on a moral basis, asserting that the play did not antagonize piety and virtue but exalted them. Although his reasoning is true and convincing and thoroughly vindicates the play, it must be remembered that it came after the play was attacked, and that it is therefore not a reliable account of his intentions at the time of composition.

It requires a great deal of hardihood, in the face of the convictions of Molière's contemporaries and of his own explicit statement, to take the opposing position that Orgon is really the centre of interest, and that the purpose of the play was not to depict a villain, as he did nowhere else than in *Don Juan*, but a superlative jackass, as he did in one way or another in all his plays. Madame de Sévigné, while she does not go so far as to say this, seems to perceive the quarter in which Molière wished to direct emphasis when she says of Orgon : "C'est la dévotion poussée à un excès possible."

Certainly it cannot be denied the play gains much from the hypocrisy of Tartuffe, in and for itself, without reference to the imbecility of Orgon, for much of the ludicrous is present in comedies about people who preach one thing and practise another, who make imposing claims and lamentably fail to fulfil them. But if internal evidence, which insistently draws attention to the antics of Orgon, is to be admitted, the centre of gravity shifts from Tartuffe to Orgon, and with it from hypocrisy to silliness.

That is why such statements as the following by Veuillot are beside the point : "Des grotesques, des sots, des vicieux, des jaloux, des amoureux, cela fourmille dans tous les chemins et pose devant tous les crayons. Un homme de bien est plus rare à trouver, plus difficile à peindre . . . Très-bien, mais la question est précisément de savoir si le théâtre en effet rectifie et adoucit les passions, ou s'il les excite . . . Je n'y vois point

cette instruction et cette honnêteté de la comédie, dont on nous parle maintenant d'un ton trop fier."

If Molière's purpose had been, as he said and as others believed, to represent the heinousness of hypocrisy, it seems reasonable to suppose that he would have chosen a convincing and clever hypocrite, a sort of incarnation of speciousness, a finished dissembler. The villain would have had to be consummate to appear formidable. But what is he in reality? A palpable fraud, whom everyone but his victim sees through, and who could not for a moment impose upon others than a nitwit or one blinded by delusions. The very speeches with which Tartuffe impressed Orgon most strongly are those which Molière must have purposely designed to be the least convincing to a normal man. Only one illustration is necessary :

Oui, mon frère, je suis un méchant, un coupable,  
Un malheureux pécheur, tout plein d'iniquité,  
Le plus grand scélérat qui jamais ait été.  
Chaque instant de ma vie est chargé de souillures ;  
Elle n'est qu'un amas de crimes et d'ordures.

Thus the play becomes the study of a credulous dupe, who is so easy that an impostor need not be in the least clever to take him in. The humorous possibilities of such a weakling lend the play an air which conforms with that of the other plays. The subject is, then, not hypocrisy, but the constantly recurrent one of a fool and the trickery by which he is overcome.

Therefore *Tartuffe* is but remotely and indirectly related to the religious questions in which controversy has blindly involved it. It is not a study of religious hypocrisy, for the villain is too crude, too obvious, to be taken seriously. Had Molière wished us to take him seriously he would have made him less transparent.

Hypocrisy and piety are here only incidental, while foolish credulity is paramount. If Bourdaloue wished to preach sermons, he need not have denounced Molière from the pulpit, but he might have railed against men who give all to a parasite and ignore and rob their families, in whose sincerity they have every reason to believe. And if Bossuet, usually so eloquent and grave, felt obliged to speak of the play with invective, he might have spent his energy, not upon Molière, but upon the Orgons of his congregation.

Like *Tartuffe*, *Don Juan* has been looked upon as the vehicle of serious moral precepts by the tolerant and open-minded reader, and of blasphemous impiety by the bigoted. In its origin it has a peculiar history, which suggests that the diatribes against

hypocrisy, while strong and broad, fail somewhat in moral effectiveness, because they spring from Molière's vehement personal indignation, and are aimed at those who oppose his *Tartuffe*. Molière was simply indignant at the Catholic puritanism which had denounced him as an atheist and a libertine, and showed his resentment in an unexpected manner with the staging of *Don Juan*.

Even here, where every internal circumstance of the play contributed to a moral and homiletic atmosphere, the edifying elements constantly subordinate themselves to the purely comic, and the most withering blasts quickly spend themselves to make way for laughter. The cause of deity and morals, here apparently very dear to Molière, is maintained by a thousand drolleries. In this there is no difference from his dozens of other manifestations of that precious satiric humour of old Gaul. Here, as elsewhere, he revels in a misanthropic mixture of contemptuous tolerance and gay perversity.

It is curious to note the grounds upon which *Don Juan* is supposed to be a serious revelation of human frailties. Entirely forgetting the virtue and patience of Elmire in *Tartuffe* and of Done Elvire in *Don Garcie de Navarre*, Weiss makes the following brow-beating statement: "Il (Molière) a pris de la nature féminine uniquement les instincts aussi rapprochés de la nature brute que cela se peut dans un état de société civilisée. . . . Il (Don Juan) n'a jamais vu Charlotte et Mathurine ; en dix minutes, en une demi-journée, si vous voulez, il leur fait accepter, à toutes deux, comme sérieuses ses promesses de mariage ; il les leur fait accepter, toutes deux étant présentes ; et toutes deux le croient ; chacune croit que c'est elle qu'il va épouser."

This is merely the faithfulness of the critic to a preconception. It is hard to feel that Molière intended to endow these ignorant girls with moral significance, or that he saw in them anything but comic butts. The vast difference between their bucolic ignorance and their presumptuous superiority over the honest Pierrot—a superiority arising from the consciousness that they had been singled out by an elegant gentleman and were to be made ladies—constitutes a delightful comedy of incongruity, and to produce this is their true function. The play does not even remotely suggest an ethical problem, but it does breathe the pure farce that arises from the antics of country bumpkins.

To say that Don Juan's duplicity towards the two wenches aggravated his villainy is to a degree true, and yet not dramatically important. An audience fully accustomed and indifferent to the moral laxity of young aristocrats would not be expected to be

much affected by it. A glance at the literature of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in France and England is enough to show the attitude of general indifference toward such matters. A typical instance lies in *Tom Jones* when Squire Western angrily asks his daughter if she would be fool enough to censure Tom her lover for deceiving a country girl. The important point in Don Juan's relationship with the two women is his humorous boldness in playing one off against the other.

## V

It has been said that Molière gave the doctors battle in five regular engagements beside countless skirmishes, and, closing his career in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, he fell fighting in the breach. Just as he exposed in the doctors of philosophy their mania for logical discussion, in and out of season, he ridiculed in the doctors of medicine their inflated reverence for Hippocrates and Galen. But the terms battle, engagements, skirmishes, fighting, all suggest the militant reformer burning with zeal to correct the abuses of a presumptuous class. Although such an intention may have had a place somewhere in the background of Molière's mind, to speak of it first and almost exclusively is to make of the dramatist no more than a reforming tractarian. The question of medicine he treated not because it involved abuses, but because it offered pre-eminent comic material. A further reason was that at Court he was happily placed where he beheld the full ludicrous effect of medical ignorance and presumption, and because the subject enjoyed a timeliness arising from the great medical controversies then raging in public. The subject had always interested him, for in his provincial career we know that he had played many pieces about doctors. In his later plays, as in *Don Juan*, where the medical allusions are neither pointed nor important, he went out of his way to ridicule doctors. Constantly in search of fresh material to engage his troupe, he naturally resorted to the favourite theme in abeyance and requiring only an exciting cause to bring it into play. The exciting cause surrounded him everywhere. *Molière and his Medical Association* gives the following: "When with his troupe he turned his face toward the capital, strife was general and furious. The spirit of desertion and revolt already alluded to now attained its highest pitch. The innovating rival camps, with their alien cries of antimony and the circulation, were competing for immediate recognition; and, if not on all points in accord, at least inseparably united in their opposition to official conservatism, leagued powerfully against them. . . .

Faithful to tradition, the leaders of the corporation proved themselves worthy of their charge. If not the avowed enemies of progress—at all events they would not hear of it from any source but their own. By the new invading movement they consequently found themselves in open and continued antagonism with legislation and discovery. They long defied all Parliamentary interference, and held in check for thirty years the surgeons and apothecaries ; they proscribed the circulation of the blood because it came from England, antimony because it came from Montpellier, quinine because it came from America. Their conclaves were the rallying centre of party warfare unequalled in the annals of medicine ; and dearly has the Faculty paid for its iniquities. Its name has become a symbol of ignorance, pretension, and routine, and to the present hour the public are disposed to hold its modern representatives chargeable with its errors, both in spirit and practice, which have long since passed away."

At this time the women, too, and the wealthy of the first society were the most active agents in spreading the medical mania, and Madame de Sévigné has left a record in her correspondence of her pratings about her liver, her spleen, her spirits, and her humours. *Molière and his Medical Association* says of her : "Without any serious scientific pretension, she is none the less curious to know something of the medical rationale, and why she should be treated on one way rather than another. She carefully collects her prescriptions, and unknown to the prescribers, makes use of them in the treatment of her friends. Nothing pleases her so much as getting three or four of the fraternity together to puzzle them with questions, and put them, when she can, in discord. Should she succeed, she triumphs and laughs at their embarrassment, an excellent motive to escape following their advice, which, if by chance she should adopt and find no benefit, it is with no small delight that she reminds them of the fact, and notes 'how she detests the doctors and their absurdities.'"

The subject was so popular that Molière was indeed not the only one to see its dramatic possibilities. In 1657 it was brought before the Court by the poet Benserade in his ballet of *L'Amour Malade*, the young King in person taking part in the dance. In 1657, the year before Molière's return to Paris, was published a fashionable novel, the *History of the Princess of Paphlagonia*, which he doubtless read. In it Mademoiselle d'Orléans vividly portrays the medical foibles of her aristocratic friends, and shows what an important part medicine played in feminine diversions.

Then the King, though he lived to a sufficiently old age, was

from earliest youth such a sorry physical specimen that throughout his reign the question of Court doctors and medicine assumed a tremendous importance. Interest in his health, perhaps as a means of flattering him, was carried so far that *Le Journal de la Santé du Roi* was instituted by the Court physician, Valot, in 1647, and continued by d'Aquin, then by Fagon till 1711. Again, *Molière and his Medical Association* gives interesting data on this : "The most casual examination of its contents at once reminds us of the trite remark, so full of truth—no man is a hero to his valet ; to put it stronger, to his physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries, the illustrious subject of its pages must have simply been contemptible. Open and consult where you will, it shows a miserable patient at the mercy of the doctors of the Faculty, and in strict conformity with its rules and ordinances, bled, purged, and ptizaned—in fine, drugged to excess often in spite of himself, and unwittingly made to play the Argan to the Beralds of the comedy, Court etiquette requiring that the world should know that the monarch, who laughed at medicine with his comedian, was docile as a child in the hands of its professors. In remarks and disquisitions quaint and curious are everywhere exhibited formulas and prescriptions 'inspired of heaven' for the preservation of a health so precious. Potion for the King, plaster for the King, lavement for the King, and so on, with a richness and variety of style which does honour to the literary skill as well as the pharmaceutical imagination of these writers, and which the King no doubt read in private more for the flattery than the counsel they contained. In journalizing without end facts and details so unpleasant, the evidence of this must have been as patent to the doctors as it was unsuspected by the patient, whose *amour propre* seems here entirely to abandon him."

With this spectacle of morbid misery and the cavortings of physicians occupying the centre of the stage in the society in which Molière moved, it is not surprising that it suggested a return to the theme of his provincial triumphs, and for the same reason to produce laughter. Nowhere could he have fallen upon a field richer in medical observation or in side-splitting absurdities. As a typical instance of the extremes to which doctors went in their recriminations, Guy Patin's opposition to the use of the new antimony is worth reading. The new remedy had been administered to the King with no bad results, as recovery followed : "That continued putrid fever had no need of the antimonial emetic, which it is announced they had given him. What saved the King was his innocence, his age, and robustness, nine good bleedings, and the prayers of worthy people like ourselves."

Later on when vertigoes and vapours predominate in the King's illnesses, Doctor Fagon courageously declares them due to the handling of too strongly perfumed papers. It was said the poor King could not read the billet-doux of Madame de Maintenon without being seized with "vertigo, and persistent yawning."

For the comedy of medical controversy such as *L'Amour Médecin* he had an abundance of material immediately about him. Again quoting *Molière and his Medical Association* : "Instances of medical dissension and cabal at any time were commonplace, but immediately before this date a case occurred of more than usual significance, and justly calculated to bring contempt on the élite of the fraternity. This was the fatal illness of the Cardinal Mazarin, the great Minister, who lay bedrid at the Château de Vincennes. Being at the point of death, four of the most eminent of the profession were summoned to a consultation to decide upon the nature of his malady. These were D'Aquin, Des Fougerais, Esprit, and Guenaut. Much contention and difference of opinion was the result of this memorable conference, and it was publicly reported. Esprit maintained that the spleen was the offending organ ; Guenaut affirmed that the liver was at fault ; Des Fougerais declared there was an abscess of the mesentery, while D'Aquin saw water on the chest and an affection of the lungs. If their science claimed to be positive, all could not be right in their diagnosis, and the circumstance becoming known excited in no small degree the criticism of the livelier Parisians of every class, always ready for a laugh at the expense of medicine and its professors." What attracted him to medicine, then, was the richness of comic material and not the desire to effect a reform.

If it were necessary to select a symbol to represent Molière's wholly justified attitude toward his doctors, his Orgons, his Argans, and his Sganarelles, it would be, not a crusader with a sword, but an irrepressible little impish Puck.

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## A SPANISH LEXICOGRAPHER

It is one of the delights of Spanish literature that in most cases the man soon appears beneath the writer. The personal note turns up in the most unexpected places, in a technical treatise, a book of theology, a grammar, a dictionary. One cannot dip many times into the dictionary of Sebastian de Covarrubias<sup>1</sup> without beginning to have an affection for its author; and it is therefore no little pleasure to have the fresh information concerning his life which has recently been unearthed in the Cuenca archives by Don Angel González Palencia, to whose untiring researches Spanish scholars are so greatly indebted. The details thus forthcoming confirm the impression of his character derived from his *Emblemas Morales* and from his dictionary. Covarrubias was not a man of many books and published nothing until the last years of his life. Those were the days when a writer was content to work on in silence and perhaps, like El Brocense, leave most of his work unpublished at his death. Sebastian de Covarrubias y Orozco was the son of the writer Sebastian de Orozco or Horozco<sup>2</sup> (to whom some critics attribute that book of many authors, *Lazarillo de Tormes*), and he was grandson of the architect of Toledo Cathedral, Alfonso de Covarrubias. Uncles of the lexicographer were that Diego de Covarrubias who became Bishop successively of Ciudad Rodrigo, Segovia, and Cuenca, and President of Castille (he died in 1577), and the Greek scholar Antonio who survived his brother by a quarter of a century and, like Luis de Leon's father, was Oidor of the Chancellery of Granada.<sup>3</sup>

Sebastian de Covarrubias' brother Juan became Bishop of Guadix; and his sister Catalina de Orozco married Don Diego de Alarcon, a Privy Councillor. Sebastian must have been born about the year 1540 at Toledo; in 1565 he was already a

<sup>1</sup> *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana*, Madrid, 1611; microphotographic reproduction by the Hispanic Society of America. New York, 1927.

<sup>2</sup> *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, vol. xii. (1925), pp. 39-72, 217-245, 376-396, 498-514: *Datos biográficos del Licenciado Sebastián de Covarrubias y Horozco*.

<sup>3</sup> To the two brothers, as to his own brother's book of *Emblemas Morales*, published twenty-one years before that of Sebastian, he frequently refers. Of Antonio he says that "de voto de los que podían juzgarlo, no fue menos docto que su hermano en los Derechos y más universal en todo género de disciplinas. No quiso escribir, diciendo que todo estaua escrito" (*Tesoro*, s.v. *Fuerojuzgo*).

prebendary of Salamanca Cathedral.<sup>1</sup> The frequent references in the *Tesoro*<sup>2</sup> to Salamanca and the customs of the neighbouring Charro peasants were sufficient evidence that he had lived in the old University city, for he was always influenced personally by the places he knew. He became Canon of Cuenca in 1579, being then at Rome;<sup>3</sup> in September of that year he came to Cuenca, which became his home for the next thirty-four years. In October, 1582, the Chapter sent him to Toledo to greet the Bishop elect of Cuenca; in 1585, at about the same time as Cervantes, he went on a pilgrimage to the Monastery of Guadalupe; in 1588 he was at Valladolid; in 1596 he went to Madrid to meet the new Bishop of Cuenca, Don Pedro de Portocarrero. From 1597 to 1600 and again 1606-7 he was at Valencia, occupied with an important and difficult ecclesiastical mission.<sup>4</sup> He became Maestrescuela of Cuenca Cathedral in 1602, and at some date unknown Consultor of the Inquisition; he was also Chaplain to King Philip II. and King Philip III. In 1610 he went to Madrid, part of his business there being the publication of his two books, the *Emblemas Morales* (Madrid, 1610), and the *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana* (Madrid, 1611). At Madrid he fell ill, but was able to return in 1611 to Cuenca, where he died on October 8, 1613. His attachment to Cuenca, known as the City of the Star,<sup>5</sup> was strong. He liked to stand looking out over the countryside.<sup>6</sup> He describes the city on its "steep rugged hill," with its narrow difficult streets, the houses sometimes having but one or two

<sup>1</sup> *Boletín, loc. cit.*, p. 506: "14 Noviembre, 1565. El señor racionero Sebastian de Covarrubias y de Horozco, natural de Toledo, bachiller artista" (Matriculation Lists of Salamanca University).

<sup>2</sup> Cf. s.v. Escaños (those used by the farmers round Salamanca); Tablado (the name given to the wineshops of *jorasteros* at Salamanca); Estrena ("En Salamanca me acuerdo que los que pregonauan el vino de alguna taberna quando se encantaua la cuba entre otras cosas que dezian invocauan a S. Iulian de buena estrena"). He mentions Salamanca's Calle del Otero (which, from being called Calle de Lutero, had to change its name to Calle de Jesus) and the word "anteomnia," used by "las amas de los estudiantes" at Salamanca, and "las pasteleras."

<sup>3</sup> In the *Tesoro*, s.v. Mesa, there is a reference to his stay in Rome ("Esto vi yo en Roma en casa de los Cardenales"); and he describes the wonders of Tivoli (s.v. Organo).

<sup>4</sup> He tells us that he had seen a chameleon in the garden of the Patriarch Don Juan de Ribera at Valencia (s.v. Camaleon); and that he had seen those who entered Valencia without a certificate in time of plague hung up by the armpits for an hour or two at the gates of the city (s.v. Horca). He remembered the excellent fish (s.v. Pagel: "pescado conocido en la ribera de Valencia, adonde yo le he comido muchas veces por ser regalado").

<sup>5</sup> *Tesoro*, s.v. Estela.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Mirador.

storeys on the street side and ten or twelve at the back, so abruptly does the ground fall away.<sup>1</sup> He mentions more than once the orchards along the valleys of the Jucar and Huecar (for a league between Palomera and Cuenca) called *hozinos*, and corresponding to the *cigarrales* of the Tagus.<sup>2</sup> He explains the proverb “Pleito en Guete y vifia en Cuenca”—“the vines of Cuenca are very bad.” He also mentions a shrub (*arlo*) of the Sierra de Cuenca used for dyeing the hair and the cloth of Cuenca known as *palmilla*. Covarrubias’ house at Cuenca now apparently forms part of the Convent of Barefoot Carmelites, to whom, in 1608, he gave a site for their convent in a garden adjoining his house.<sup>3</sup> His household was a large one. He held that one should live according to one’s rank.<sup>4</sup> He had chaplains and a household surgeon, a housekeeper, pages, lacqueys (or, as he would have preferred to call them, *mozos de espuelas*), servants and slaves. To slavery he objected on humanitarian grounds;<sup>5</sup> but he found servants troublesome; they are always giving notice; they seem to play at a game of cross purposes (*tirafloxa*), and continually do exactly what they are told not to do.<sup>6</sup> He must often have shaken his head when he compared them to the discipline of galley-slaves, which he so much admired.<sup>7</sup> In his will he says that he has had many servants of either sex.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps in his love of order and discipline he was not always an easy master to serve; he must have been particular about his wooden bed with blue hangings, his oratory with figures of alabaster, his tapestries representing trees and animals.<sup>9</sup> We know that he had several quarrels with the Chapter of Cuenca Cathedral. They employed him con-

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Cuenca.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Garganta.

<sup>3</sup> See A. González Palencia in *Boletín de la Real Academia Española*, vol. xii. (1925), pp. 220, 221, 388.

<sup>4</sup> *Tesoro*, s.v. *Fasto*: “Es muy justo que cada cual se trate como quien es.” He objects to those who might live on capons and partridges, eating onions “and other harmful foods” (*Boletín, loc. cit.*, p. 226). In the *Tesoro*, s.v. *Rico*, he echoes the eternal complaint (especially valid in that century of the newly rich) that “Oy dia todo lo sugeta el dinero” (*nowadays* money is all-powerful). He held the dubious proposition that the riches of some entailed the poverty of others: “Para que enriquezcan unos han de empobrecer otros.”

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Negro*: “No se ha de despreciar a nadie por bajo y humilde que sea”; *Pringar*, etc.

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Mes*, *Refunfuñar*, *Roncean*, etc. He speaks of “criados necios y desmedidos.”

<sup>7</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Galera*.

<sup>8</sup> *Boletín, loc. cit.*, p. 391.

<sup>9</sup> C. Pérez Pastor, *Bibliografía Madrileña*, vol. ii., p. 198. He left five tapestries (“de bosquejo y animales grandes”) to his nephew, the *Corregidor* of Badajoz.

tinually on very various business—building, buying of timber, librarian's work, diplomacy. His humane temperament, shown in his objection to slavery, is also evident in his continual strictures on the subject of the rough education of school children. This might be said to be his favourite theme.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, he speaks of the good influence of a university education on character.<sup>2</sup> Covarrubias was not a poet—that is, he had no genius for poetry; he wrote poetry in his youth, and when at Valencia, the Viceroy, the Duke of Lerma, asked him for a poem, and he composed the *Moral Emblems* in *ottava rima*.<sup>3</sup> Nicolás Antonio had in his hands the manuscript of Covarrubias' translation of the *Satires of Horace*, in blank verse, and a specimen appears in the *Tesoro*.<sup>4</sup>

He had great admiration for Garcí Lasso and for Castillejo ("un gran poeta cuyas obras celebramos"). It is more surprising to find him admiring Ronsard;<sup>5</sup> not that, even when Italian influence was at its height in Spain, French literature lacked admirers there,<sup>6</sup> but Covarrubias' extravagant praise (he sets it on a level with Homer and Virgil) causes grave doubt whether he had ever read *La Franciade*. Had he read *Don Quixote*, which was published some years before he finished his *Tesoro*? Apparently not; he makes no mention of it when he explains the saying, "Allá va Sancho con su rocino": Dizen que este era un

<sup>1</sup> In addition to the passages quoted in the *Boletín, loc. cit.*, pp. 224-225, there are several interesting outbursts in the *Tesoro*; for instance, s.v. *Letra* and *Curriaga* ("Grandissima rabia me toma cuando veo los tiranos maestros de escuelas açotar a los niños con tan poca piedad"). It is curious that Fray Luis de Leon, with his hatred of all tyrannies, had had nothing to say on this subject. Covarrubias' own childhood was not unhappy if we are to judge by the only memory of it that survives—a memory slight but charming. He tells us that "siendo yo niño me hazian entender cuando le oía cantar que dezia tres tres cerezas o queres queres cerezas" (*Tesoro*, s.v. *Francolin*).

<sup>2</sup> *Tesoro*, s.v. *Colegio*.

<sup>3</sup> Pérez Pastor, *Bibliografía Madrileña*, vol. ii., p. 179. When the Viceroy asked him for a poem he says that he had nothing but "un quaderno de las niñerías de mi mocedad." The Emblems were later published as "las primicias de mis trabajos."

<sup>4</sup> *Tesoro*, s.v. *Citar*: Eleven lines from his version of *Ibam jorte*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Francia*: "Pedro de Ronsar, gentilhombre vandomés, escriuio *Las Franciadas* en su lengua vulgar que ni Virgilio ni Homero le hacen ventaja."

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Argote de Molina ("el más excelente Ronsardo"); Bartolomé de Argensola ("Ronsardo, poeta francés de mucha gallardía"). Covarrubias has greater praise for France than for any other foreign country: "Gente belicosa, ingeniosa en las artes mecánicas y en las liberales, florentissima en letras; y sería escusado querer yo aquí emprender loar lo que este Reyno es y ha sido."

hombre gracioso . . .;<sup>1</sup> and to him no doubt Cervantes was a mere Romancista (writer in the vulgar tongue and for the common people). Covarrubias himself bears witness to his love of music. He was never weary of listening to the cathedral organist, although, like a good Castilian, he liked the music to be subordinate to the words; when, however, he looked round at the faces of the other canons he perceived that they were less happy and were inclined to murmur: "What do you mean by your mountainous fugues?"<sup>2</sup>

The impression Covarrubias gives us is that of a gentleman and a scholar: indeed he singularly resembles an English church dignitary of the old school. He has a great love of order and discipline. He dislikes tramps and vagrom men; gipsies (*esta mala canalla* who are always stealing in the towns and villages through which they pass), newsmongers (*noveleros, parleros*: brave men, he says, are as a rule courteous and not talkative, *corteses y callados*), *arbitristas* with their fantastic plans to make their country prosperous, unprofessional *saludadores* and *santiguaderos*, gamblers. Over the spirits (*duendes*) which haunt houses he had no control (he is even inclined to derive the blackamoor firedogs, *morillos*, from lemures, spirits of the hearth); but women he seems to have objected to as liable to interrupt the punctual order of life. The word *dama* he says may be derived from an Arabic word for "tears," and he adds that women "certainly cause tears more easily than smoke or onions." Women and children, he says elsewhere, are always thinking of their own interests. There was very little of the mystic about Covarrubias. His creed was to avoid all excess. The fancied revelations or ecstatic women (common at that time) were as distasteful<sup>3</sup> to him as the hypocrisy of false penitents, "*necios abominables* who scourge themselves in processions out of vanity." He had great admiration for the order-loving Jesuits<sup>4</sup> and for the justice of the Inquisitors.<sup>5</sup> A touch which somehow brings him and his house vividly before us is his complaint<sup>6</sup> about the swallows: they enter

<sup>1</sup> *Tesoro*, s.v. *Sanchos*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Motete*: "Yo soy tan aficionado a la musica que aunque se alarguen no me dan pena. Pero veo a muchos de los que asisten en el coro que estan rebentando; especialmente que componen con tanto artificio y ruido que la letra no se entiende, ocasion de gran fastidio."

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Revelar*: "Estas revelaciones a veces suelen ser ilusiones del demonio, o flaqueza de cabeza de algunas beatas, que forman en la fantasia cien disparates."

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Jesus*.

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Inquirir* (*integerrimos jueces*).

<sup>6</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. *Golondrina*. He preferred the orderly ways of cats (s.v. *Exe*). He did not object to a moderate use of ice in drinks in summer, but deplores its excessive use summer and winter (s.v. *Nieve*). Of the

and leave a house at their will and leave it all dirty; Canon Covarrubias hated dirt, and must have done his utmost to banish the swallows. This love of order was shown when the time came to make his will and in the ordering of his tomb in the cathedral. For the construction and appointments of a chapel in which he was to be buried he left two thousand ducats; and in his pleasure at things well done he attended to the minutest details: sometimes he faintly recalls the bishop ordering his tomb at St. Praxed's. His chapel was well furnished with chalices and chasubles; he gave special instructions that, when canons and other dignitaries said Mass there, white wine and white wax were to be provided,<sup>1</sup> while a curious, one might think almost a pagan clause, enacted that both on All Saints' Day and on the Day of the Dead four pints of wine and a corresponding measure of wheat should be placed on his tomb every year for ever.<sup>2</sup>

Gaspar Scioppius found fault with Covarrubias for having in his *Tesoro* digressed too frequently "in amoenos eruditio[n]is campos."<sup>3</sup> This very defect has given long life to his dictionary, for it abounds in quaint and curious information. The fault we find with it today is rather that he should have given more space to what was new to his readers than to what was familiar to him and them, and would now be of rare value to us. Covarrubias is wisely brief on the subject of the crocodile, but on the elephant he has no less than ten pages, and he abounds in quotations from Martial and Horace, and in classical allusions. But we can hardly blame him for taking the natural and more difficult course, and no doubt it was an age when men "would not give a doit to relieve a lame beggar, and would lay out ten to see a dead Indian." The opportunities thus missed should be a warning to later writers not to neglect the ordinary facts and customs of their own time. Covarrubias does give us a great deal of what must have seemed to him and his contemporaries the most commonplace information, but which time has transmuted into pure gold. He tells us that rosemary is so common in Spain that they heat the ovens with it; and incidental remarks of this kind give a pleasant savour of the soil to his dictionary. He gives a most careful

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long ruffs (s.v. *Lechuguilla*), he says that they now rather resemble the leaves of a dock than those of a lettuce. Of the former abuse of the Obispillos he remarks: "Esto gracias a Dios se ha quitado totalmente." One can imagine that during those thirty years everything was as orderly in Cuenca Cathedral as in the Canon's own house.

<sup>1</sup> *Boletín*, p. 383.

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, p. 384. For the ornaments of the chapel, see *Boletín*, pp. 503-505.

<sup>3</sup> N. Antonio, *Bibliotheca Hispana Nova* (ed. 1788), vol. ii., p. 279.

description of the popular *pandero*; he has an eye for the *lmparas* (garlands hung on house-doors on the morning of St. John). He has an ear for the popular wedding songs,<sup>1</sup> and the May songs (*en tiempo de mayas*); he describes the sword-dance "now customary in the kingdom of Toledo";<sup>2</sup> and he frequently quotes from Mingo Revulgo, and he gives the first lines of scores of old popular songs (*cantares viejos, cantarcillos*),<sup>3</sup> and is prodigal of proverbs. He saw the importance of the ancient poetry for the Spanish language,<sup>4</sup> to which he was devoted, despite his contempt for the writers who knew no other.<sup>5</sup> He admired it as "áspera y fuerte" with its many r's; he calls it *varonil*, virile; and he regrets that soldiers and courtiers have introduced many words from Rome into the Spanish language. A Spanish academician recently lamented<sup>6</sup> that Spanish should be more inclined to follow English in incorporating foreign words than German in carefully eschewing them.

Readers of modern German may have failed to notice this fastidious purity; but certainly it must be difficult to justify such forms as the modern Spanish *mitin*, or *fular*, or *futbol*, for meeting, foulard, football. In his derivations of words, Covarrubias shows an advance on Vanegas (whom with El Brocense he so frequently quotes); but sometimes he is a little too ingenious: he derives both *perol* and *perro* from the Greek for fire; and both *muchacho* and *tacaño* from the Greek for bad. With various difficult languages to deal with—Hebrew, Basque, and Arabic, as well as Greek and Roman—the task was not an easy one.<sup>7</sup> Covarrubias can be concise and human at the same time,<sup>8</sup> but there are a good many repetitions; for instance, the article under *reja* (plough-

<sup>1</sup> *Tesoro*, s.v. Epithalamio: "Oy dia se usa en las aldeas de Castilla la vieja donde yo he oydo muchos que los cantan los moços y las donzelladas y las casadas."

<sup>2</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Dança de espadas and Espada.

<sup>3</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Son: "Hazme el son con el cuento del gancho (muñera rhythm)."

<sup>4</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Cerca: "Con tanta autoridad y gravedad se puede alegar el diuino Garcilasso en comprobacion de la lengua Espanola como Virgilio y Homero en la Latina y Griega. Y qualquier romance viejo o cantarcillo comunmente recibido."

<sup>5</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Sátira: "Esto he puesto en latín por más claridad, los Romancistas tengan paciencia."

<sup>6</sup> El Conde de Gimeno in *Boletín de la Real Academia Espanola*, vol. xiv., pp. 689-691 (December, 1927).

<sup>7</sup> See *Tesoro*, s.v. Romance: "Se puede colegir quan gran trabajo ha sido y atrevimiento grande querer yo darles a todos sus orígenes."

<sup>8</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Gusto *ad fin.*: "No nos derramemos a más sino concluyamos, porque esta letra G quede con gusto," s.v. Moriscos: "Si ellos son Catolicos gran merced les ha hecho Dios y a nosotros tambien."

share and iron screen) is repeated almost word for word. We must remember that it was the work of his old age. His work on the dictionary seems to have occupied about ten years. We know that he was about a third of the way through his laborious task at the end of November,<sup>1</sup> and was then doubtful of reaching the end of it. He was then writing at Valencia, which thus has some share in Cuenca's glory,<sup>2</sup> as well as Madrid, where Luis Sanchez published it two years before its author's death. Its publication cost Covarrubias the heavy sum of two thousand ducats.<sup>3</sup>

AUBREY F. G. BELL.

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*, s.v. Catalina: "A los 25. de Nouiembre, que acierta a ser el mismo dia que esto se escribe en Valencia año de 1606;" s.v. Catarro: "La obra es muy larga y la vida corta: proseguiré hasta donde Dios fuere servido."

<sup>2</sup> A. González Palencia in *Boletín*, *loc. cit.*, p. 38: "Como conquense me felicito de poder decir hoy que el *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana* fué pensado, estudiado y redactado en nuestra noble ciudad de Cuenca."

<sup>3</sup> C. Pérez Pastor, *Bibliografía Madrileña*, vol. ii., p. 199. This would be equivalent to very little less than £2,000 of our present money.

## QUARTERLY NOTES

## ANNUAL MEETING

THE Annual Meeting of the Association will be held at University College, Gower Street, London, W.C., at 3 p.m. on Saturday, June 30, when Professor Carleton Brown will deliver the Presidential Address, entitled "The Texts and the Man."

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The Hon. Treasurer acknowledges with many thanks the undermentioned contributions to the Capital Fund: H. F. Eggeling, Esq., 7s. 6d.; Professor J. G. Robertson, 13s. 6d.; Alex. Bell, Esq., 5s.; Miss Joyce Tompkins, 5s.; Mts M. Hope Dodds, 5s.; Dr. J. F. Bense, 4s. 3d.; S. N. Ghose, Esq., 3s. 3d.; Smaller sums, 1s. 9d. Total, £2 5s. 3d.

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The Hon. Treasurer wishes to remind members that subscriptions for the current year were payable on October 1, 1927. Those who have not yet paid their subscription to the Association and for the *Modern Language Review* are earnestly requested to do so without delay.

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## PUBLICATIONS RECEIVED

THE following Publications have been received, and forwarded to the Editor of the *Bibliography of English Language and Literature*: *Two Wordsworthian Chapbooks*, by Helen Sard Hughes. *Modern Philology*; vol. xxv., No. 2; November, 1927. *Philological Quarterly*; vol. vii., No. 1; January, 1928. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*; edited by Carleton Brown; vol. xlii., No. 4; December, 1927. *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*; edited by Carleton Brown; vol. xliii., No. 1; March, 1928.

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## INQUIRIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

MR. GEOFFREY BULLOUGH, the University, Manchester, is working on Henry More's "Psychozoia," "Minor Poems," and "Divine Dialogues," and would be glad to know if anyone else is working on these.

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The Librarian, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tenn., U.S.A., would be glad to know if any member could spare a copy of the Bulletin No. 7. Our stock of this number is entirely exhausted and the Librarian is anxious to complete their file of Bulletins; we should therefore be glad if anyone who has a copy to spare would communicate with the Librarian direct.

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A group of mediæval workers at Princeton University, headed by Professors E. C. Armstrong and C. C. Marden, has undertaken the preparation of editions of the French *Roman d'Alexandre* and the Spanish *Libro de Alexandre*. Reproductions have already been secured of the known manuscripts and fragments of manuscripts of these poems. Any one having information regarding manuscript material which has heretofore passed unnoticed will confer a favour if he will transmit it to either of the above-named sponsors of the project.

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Mr. Gerard E. Jensen, 25, West 45th Street, New York City, is collecting materials for a biography of Henry Cayler Bunner, and will be glad to hear of any relevant letters or papers.

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## LIST OF RECENTLY ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE M.H.R.A.

### AMERICAN.

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Anderson, Miss Marjorie, Ph.D., 106, East 52nd Street, New York City, U.S.A.

Anderson, Miss Ruth L., Ph.D., Dept. of English, University of Iowa, Iowa City, U.S.A.

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Hurlburt, Albert F., 5410, Thomas Avenue, Philadelphia, U.S.A.

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Kettner, Frederick, 1001, East 167th Street, New York City, U.S.A.

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Neff, Emery E., Hamilton Hall, Columbia University, New York City, U.S.A.

Nelson, J. H., Ph.D., University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kan., U.S.A.

Noad, Professor Algy Smillie, M.A., 510, Journalism Building, Columbia University, New York City, U.S.A.

O'Donnell, Professor George H. R., Ph.D., 1630, Tibbitts Avenue, Troy, N.Y., U.S.A.

Parks, Professor G. B., Ph.D., Washington University, St. Louis, Mo., U.S.A.

Parrott, T. M., A.M., Ph.D., Princeton University, Princeton, N.J., U.S.A.

Pfander, H. G., M.A., Dept. of English, Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Pa., U.S.A.

Richards, Alfred E., Durham, N.H., U.S.A.

Saunders, Laurance J., Dept. of History, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisc., U.S.A.

Shackford, Professor Martha H., B.A., Ph.D., 7, Midland Road, Wellesley, Mass., U.S.A.

Snow, Professor R. H., B.A., B.Litt., Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pa., U.S.A.

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